This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An extensible schema stored as computer-executable instructions ~~in~~ on a computer readable medium for defining a respective visual appearance for a plurality of computer system components in accordance with a user interface skin theme, the schema comprising:

a system schema file ~~for specifying~~ containing skin-theme metadata that describes allowable form and content of theme-authoring data that defines at least one display attribute for at least one user interface component, the system schema file including at least one definition of a plurality of user interface parts, wherein a theme packager uses the system schema file for validating contents of a theme-authoring file, and

the system schema file including a definition of a plurality of user interface part states corresponding to at least a respective one of the user interface parts.

Claim 2 (original): The schema of claim 1 wherein the system schema file further comprises a definition of a common set of enumerations for shared use by a plurality of modules that cooperate to display the graphical user interface in accordance with the skin theme.

Claim 3 (original): The schema of claim 2 wherein the system schema file includes a common set of properties defined based at least in part on at least one of the common enumerations.

Claim 4 (original): The schema of claim 3 wherein strings and enumeration values for a plurality of the properties are defined in a single table using a two-pass include technique.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The schema of claim of claim ~~1~~ 4 wherein at least one of the plurality of modules is selected from the group consisting of: a theme manager, a theme-authoring file, and at least one theme-aware control.

Claim 6 (original): The schema of claim 5 wherein:

at least one of the at least one theme-aware control is a custom theme-aware control that specifies allowable form and content of data in a custom schema file;

the custom schema file including at least one definition of a plurality of custom user interface parts; and

the custom schema file including a definition of a plurality of user interface part states corresponding to at least a respective one of the custom user interface parts.

Claim 7 (original): The schema of claim 6 wherein the custom schema file is compiled into a dynamic link library of the custom theme-aware control.

Claim 8 (currently amended): ~~The schema of claim 7~~ An extensible schema stored as computer-executable instructions on a computer readable medium for defining a respective visual appearance for a plurality of computer system components in accordance with a user interface skin theme, the schema comprising:

a system schema file containing skin-theme metadata that describes allowable form and content of theme-authoring data that defines at least one display attribute for at least one user interface component, the system schema file including at least one definition of a plurality of user interface parts, wherein a theme packager uses the system schema file for validating contents of a theme-authoring file;

the system schema file including a definition of a plurality of user interface part states corresponding to at least a respective one of the user interface parts;

wherein at least one theme-aware control is displayed in accordance with the skin theme;

wherein at least one of the at least one theme-aware control is a custom theme-aware control that specifies allowable form and content of data in a custom schema file;

wherein the custom schema file includes at least one definition of a plurality of custom user interface parts;

wherein the custom schema file includes a definition of a plurality of user interface part states corresponding to at least a respective one of the custom user interface parts;

wherein the custom schema file is compiled into a dynamic link library of the custom theme-aware control; and

wherein the dynamic link library of the custom theme-aware control is registered as a path value in a registry key.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The schema of claim 8, wherein the ~~further comprising a~~ theme packager ~~for attempting~~ attempts to call at least one dynamic link library to retrieve corresponding custom schema information.

Claim 10 (original): The schema of claim 9 wherein the theme packager automatically attempts to call a plurality of dynamic link libraries to retrieve respective custom theme schema information based upon a format of at least one of the system schema file and the custom schema file.

Claim 11 (original): The schema of claim 10 further comprising a theme loader for loading registered control dynamic link libraries when a packaged theme file is loaded into memory of the computer.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A method of using at least one schema file for theming the appearance of a computer operating system user interface, the method comprising the steps of:

defining system skin theme metadata in a system schema file, wherein the system skin theme metadata describes allowable form and content of system theme authoring data;

using the system theme authoring data to describe ~~describing~~ at least one system theme in accordance with the system skin theme metadata thereby generating at least one system theme description;

generating a packaged theme file based at least in part upon the at least one system theme description;

using the system skin theme metadata to validate the at least one system theme description; and

loading the packaged theme file into memory of the computer.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

defining custom skin theme metadata in a custom schema file;

describing at least one custom theme in accordance with the custom skin theme metadata; and

generating the packaged theme file based at least in part upon the at least one custom theme.

Claim 14 (cancelled).

Claim 15 (currently amended): The method of claim ~~14~~ 13 further comprising the step of: verifying that the at least one custom theme complies with the custom skin theme metadata.

Claim 16 (currently amended): A computer-readable storage medium storing thereon computer-executable instructions for theming the appearance of a computer operating system user interface by performing ~~the method of claim 12~~ steps comprising:

defining system skin theme metadata in a system schema file, wherein the system skin theme metadata describes allowable form and content of system-theme-authoring data;

using the system-theme authoring data to describe ~~describing~~ at least one system theme in accordance with the system skin theme metadata thereby generating at least one system-theme description;

generating a packaged theme file based at least in part upon the at least one system-theme description;

using the system skin theme metadata to validate the at least one system-theme description; and

loading the packaged theme file into memory of the computer.

Claim 17 (currently amended): ~~A~~ The computer-readable storage medium ~~storing thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method~~ of claim ~~13~~ 16 containing further computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:

defining custom skin theme metadata in a custom schema file;

describing at least one custom theme in accordance with the custom skin theme metadata; and

generating the packaged theme file based at least in part upon the at least one custom theme.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A computer system comprising computer-readable instructions stored on a computer storage medium, such computer-readable instructions defining an extensible schema for defining a respective visual appearance for a plurality of computer system components in accordance with a user interface skin theme, the schema comprising

a system schema file ~~for specifying~~ containing skin-theme metadata that describes allowable form and content of theme-authoring data that defines at least one display attribute for at least one user interface component, the system schema file including at least one definition of a plurality of user interface parts, wherein a theme packager uses the system schema file for validating contents of a theme-authoring file; and

the system schema file including a definition of a plurality of user interface part states corresponding to at least a respective one of the user interface parts.